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The Future of Work and Sustainability: AI, Automation, And Job Redesign. A Systematic Review

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Abstract: Objective and prior work: The future of work (FoW) is associated with automation, job redesign and a jobless environment, which threatens sustainability, as earning a decent salary is the primary source of income for most people worldwide. This study examined major trends in the literature on the future of work and sustainability, identified how the future of work will be redesigned, and recommended strategies to ensure sustainability in the future of work. **Approach:** A systematic literature review of one hundred and seventy-nine (179) articles retrieved from Scopus using the PRISMA Protocol was conducted. **Results:** The literature on FoW and sustainability focuses on automation and technological unemployment, skills mismatch and lifelong learning, changing work forms, nearshoring and reshoring, rising inequalities, generational shifts in the workforce, and social and environmental sustainability. **Implications:** FoW should be redesigned around teams and horizontal cross-functional projects; intelligent, adaptable smart systems; and hybrid interaction, with resilience, scalability, and interoperability. Whilst the workforce should have resilient and skilled operators, optimising contingent and full-time workers. **Value:** The workplace environment should have mobile, hybrid, remote, and distributed workplaces. Policymakers should promote fair labour practices, enhance digital literacy, promote ethical use of AI and ensure inclusive reskilling opportunities.

Keywords: minimum automation; artificial intelligence; digital skills; reskilling

JEL Classification: O32

1. Introduction

The rapid speed of technological advancement and automation is associated with a jobless future of work, which has adverse social consequences that contradict sustainable development goals (SDGs) to end poverty (SDG 1), facilitate decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone (Linthorst & Waal, 2020). Future of Work (FoW) serves as a collective term to describe future working environments that today are characterised by increasing digitalisation, requirements for sustainability, and resilience (Singer-Coudoux, Braun & Stahre, 2022). Labour markets in both developing and developed countries are transforming through the adoption of

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artificial intelligence and automation; hence, managers, policymakers, and workers are concerned about the future of work and how jobs can be redesigned in response to automation.

The current technological innovations are capital-intensive and more profitable to those who invest than to those who offer labour. They are skill-demanding, so they benefit workers with strong technical skills, and they are labour-saving, so they tend to reduce the overall number of low-skilled workers (Magnani, 2025). These factors have great implications for the sustainability of the less educated and the poor. FoW will be associated with increasing inequality, especially for low-skilled employees, routine jobs and gig workers. However, the benefits that accrue from the use of technology are valuable, ranging from profitability, efficiency, speed and cost-effectiveness; hence, the future of work will change, and employees and companies are required to evolve and manage the change.

Nevertheless, another school of thought argues that AI is both a disruptor and a creator of jobs (Khan et al., 2024); while automation and AI displace workers from simple, routine tasks governed by explicit rules that can be programmed into computers, new roles emerge in cognitive, non-routine, complex tasks that lack explicit rules and require greater flexibility and creativity (Kolade & Owoseni, 2022). The challenge lies in how companies redesign future work to ensure employees retain their roles and collaborate effectively with new AI and automated systems.

The debate about the future of work has gained momentum in recent years, focusing on the implications of AI adoption and automation. Nonetheless, there remains a gap in research specifically on social and sustainability issues to curb increasing inequalities and other associated implications. This study aims to examine the future of work and sustainability and propose strategies for job redesign through a systematic literature review.

2. Materials and Methods

The study employed a systematic literature review methodology with bibliometric analysis. The bibliometric approach summarises large quantities of data to illustrate the state of the intellectual structure and emerging trends in a research area through quantitative evaluation and interpretation (Donthu et al., 2021). The methodology was adopted because the study's scope is broad and involves extensive datasets, which requires a literature review mapping and performance analysis. Conversely, systematic reviews synthesise and summarise existing literature on a specific research topic through content and thematic analysis, especially when the scope is narrow with a smaller dataset (Donthu et al., 2021). The two methodologies were used complementarily to triangulate qualitative and quantitative insights, enabling an in-depth analysis of the literature.

2.1. Research Questions

This research aims to explore the future of work and sustainability, focusing on the impact of AI, automation, and the necessary redesign of jobs. The guiding research questions are:

1. What are the current research trends in the future of work and sustainability?

2. How can work be restructured to meet the new job requirements of the future of work?

3. How can policymakers ensure inclusive and sustainable labour market transitions?

2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

An article search using the term 'future of work' was conducted on the Scopus database in March 2026. This database was chosen for its extensive and reputable range of peer-reviewed journals. The author used the ChatGPT artificial intelligence application to find synonyms of 'future of work' and 'sustainability' and to refine the Boolean operators. The following Boolean operators and search string were used: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("future of work" OR "changing nature of work" OR "workforce transformation" OR "future labour market" OR "employment transformation" OR "workplace innovation" OR "new world of work" OR "emerging work trends" OR "digital transformation of work" OR "automation and employment") AND (sustainability OR "sustainable development" OR "environmental sustainability" OR "social sustainability" OR "economic sustainability" OR "corporate sustainability" OR "green economy" OR ESG OR "climate sustainability" OR "sustainable workplace*"). The preliminary search in Scopus reflected that there were 318 papers on the future of work and sustainability. However, the publication trend of the papers showed that real debate on the future of work started in 2019 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the search was limited to the research period of 2019-2026, where 287 documents were exported for analysis. The search was conducted within the article, abstract and keywords. The search was further restricted to papers published in English, including articles, book chapters, and conference papers, and the screening process yielded 179 relevant papers on FoW and sustainability. Figure 1 illustrates the screening process and the articles selected for analysis.

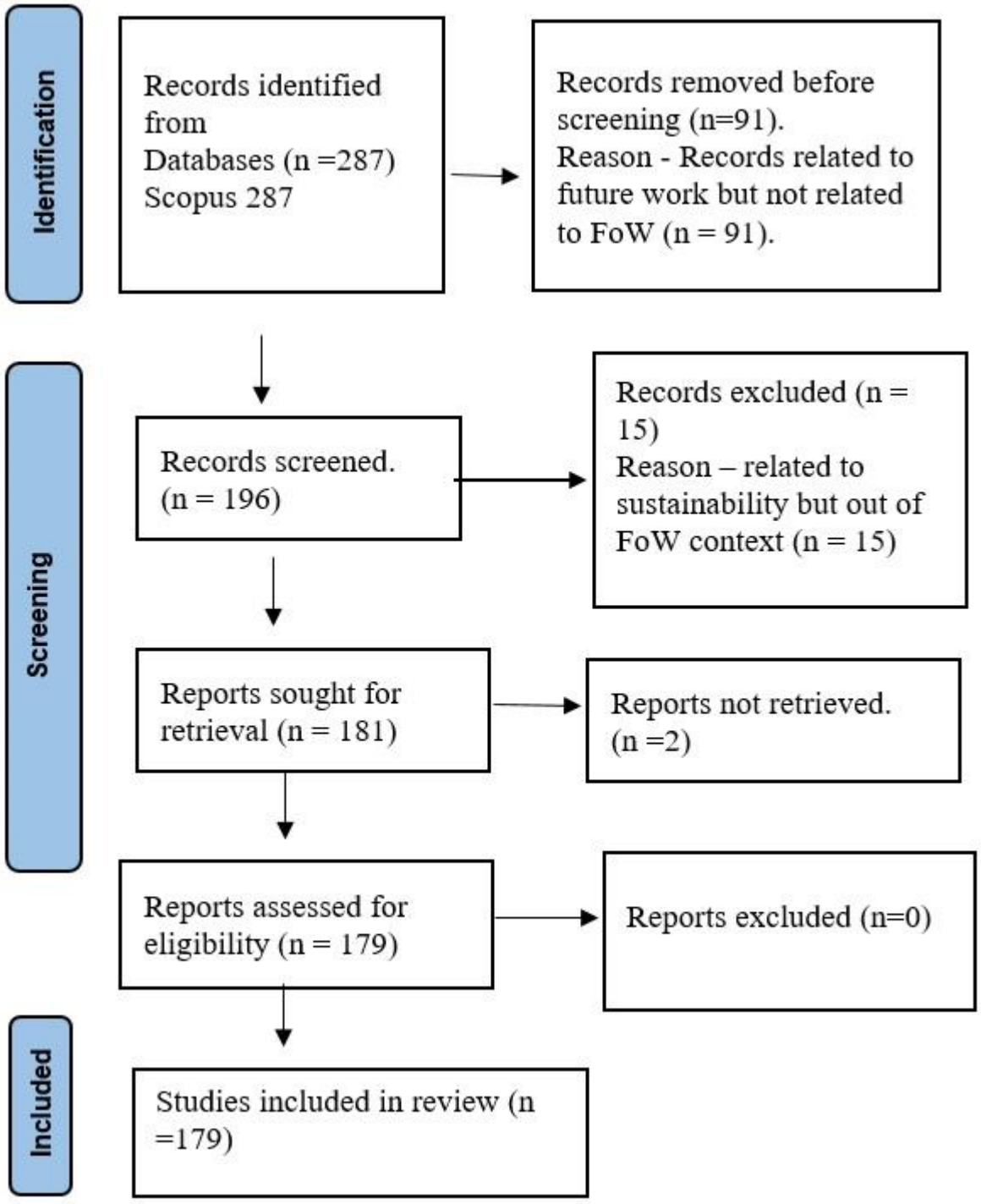

Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart of the literature review process

Source: Authors' compilation (2026)

2.3. Data Analysis

Key bibliometric analyses, including co-citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis and network visualisation, were conducted using VOSviewer software and Excel. A systematic review was conducted through content and thematic analysis. Themes emerged from the literature, and coding used an inductive approach.

3. Results

3.1. Bibliometric Descriptive Statistics

The time span of the literature ranges from 2019 to 2026, and the study examined 179 articles from 161 journal sources. The collaboration among authors was highly concentrated within the same country, with 580 authors contributing and 34 single-authored documents. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the papers included in the systematic literature review. The selected articles have an average citation count of 7.19, with 103 articles receiving at least one citation and 50 articles having 5 or more citations, indicating that citations are evenly distributed.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the papers

Main information about the data	
Timespan	2019-2026
Sources (Journals)	161
Documents	179
Average citation per document	7.19
Document content	
All Keywords Plus (ID)	1316
Author's Keywords	647
Authors	
Authors	580
Authors' collaboration	
Single-authored docs	34
Contributing countries	68

Source: Authors' compilation, 2026

3.2. Keyword Co-Occurrence

Keyword co-occurrences identify main topics and trends in the literature. Trends in the FoW literature were mainly focused on four clusters, as indicated in Figure 2. First, cluster 1 (blue colour) focused on sustainability, Industry 4.0, Industry 5.0, workplace innovation, decision-making, leadership and resilience; second, cluster 2 (red colour) focused on FoW, artificial intelligence, employment, education, workforce developments and labour markets; third, cluster 3 (green colour) focused on FoW, humans, human health, work environment and pandemics; fourth, cluster 4 (yellow colour) focused on digital transformation, human resources management, industrial revolutions and workforce transformations.

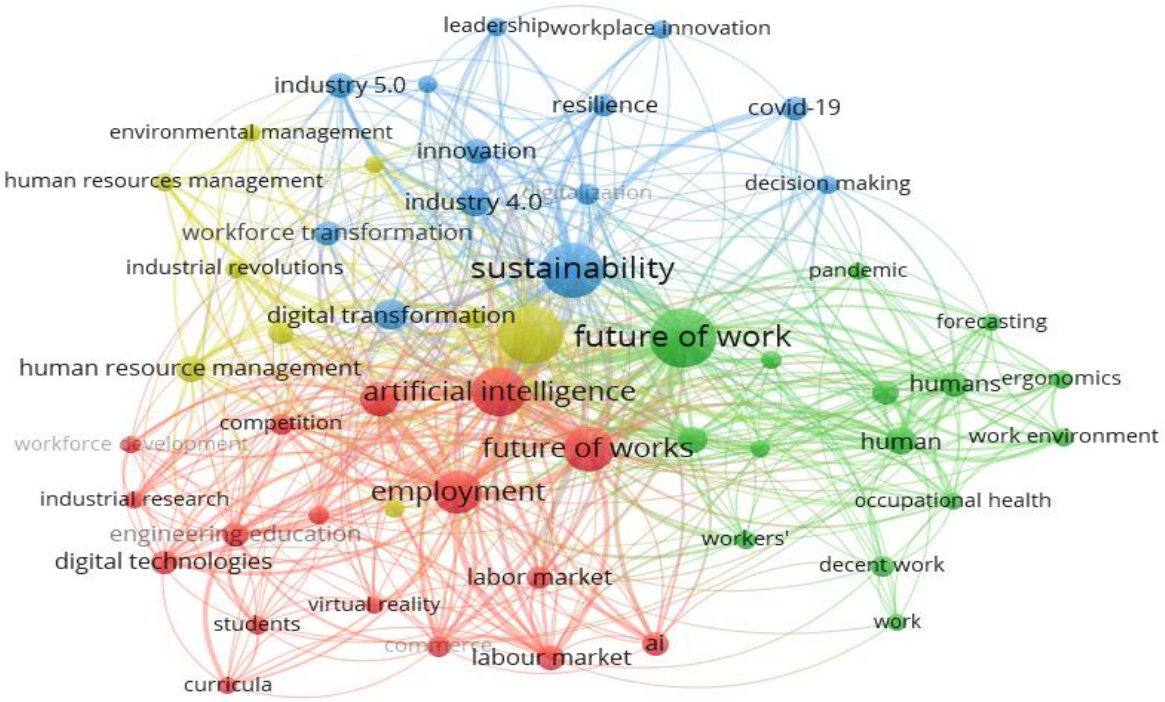

Figure 2. Keyword co-occurrence

Author's compilation (2026)

A term co-occurrence analysis based on text data extracted from the title and abstract was done, and a full count of 5752 key terms was identified, but only 388 terms which appeared more than 5 times were considered for analysis. Ten major themes were extracted for the analysis, as represented by ten colours in Figure 3. Workforce transformation, governance, leadership, skill education, digital skills, pandemics, future work, occupational wealth, workplace innovation and social responsibility emerged as major themes.

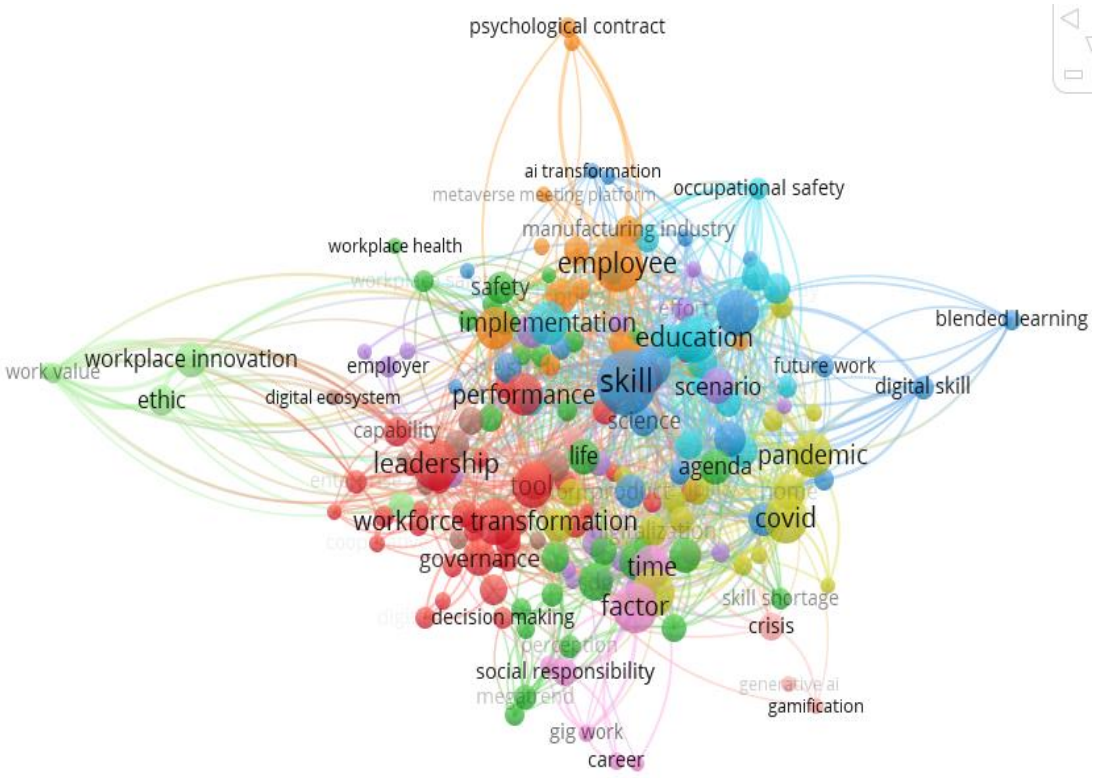

Figure 3. Keyword co-occurrence

Author's compilation (2026)

3.3. Publications by Year

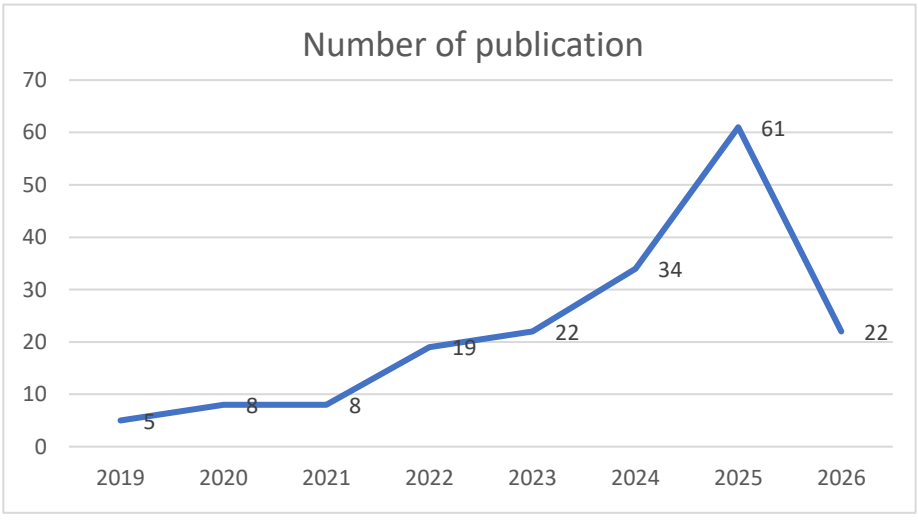

Figure 4. Publications by year

Author's compilation (2026)

The debate and attention on FoW increased from 2019, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The forced lockdown and work-from-home models enforced to protect against the spread of the coronavirus developed new ways of working that changed job designs post-pandemic. The publication trend shows an increasing trend during the years 2022 to 2025, which reflects an increased discussion on AI implementation and job redesigns. Only the first quarter of 2026 was represented in this study.

3.4. Thematic Analysis on Current Research Trends in the Future of Work and Sustainability

The literature trend on the FoW and sustainability is concentrated on automation and technological unemployment, skills mismatch and continuous lifelong learning, changing work forms, nearshoring and reshoring, increasing inequalities, generational shifts in the workforce, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability. This section discusses the major themes discussed in the FoW literature.

3.4.1. Theme One: AI-Enhanced Automation and Technological Unemployment

The literature indicates that the future of work (FoW) is characterised by the automation of repetitive and low-skilled jobs. However, AI systems are now capable of automating even more complex tasks, as they can replicate human intelligence and behaviours. When combined with other technologies such as the Internet of Things, virtual reality, data analytics, and neural networks, AI systems have the potential to replace human labour and reduce employment opportunities, especially for less-skilled, repetitive jobs. Nonetheless, they may also create new job opportunities for individuals with digital competencies. There remains a lack of consensus in the literature regarding the overall impact of automation on employment. Specifically, the number of new jobs created may not match the jobs that are replaced, and displaced workers may not possess the qualifications needed for the new roles generated by technological advancements (Schulte et al., 2020). Rab-Kettler and Lehnervp (2019) argued that widespread unemployment could necessitate the implementation of a universal basic income.

In the agricultural sector, developed countries are rapidly adopting robots, drones, self-driving vehicles, and sensors. Larger farms are integrating machines with artificial intelligence, where human roles mainly involve control and supervision (Magnani, 2025). In manufacturing, robots are replacing many workers, leading to a demand for data analysts, application developers, and cybersecurity specialists, while the need for general labourers declines. To promote sustainability, employers should focus on retraining employees to supervise and manage robotic systems instead of replacing them (Magnani, 2025).

In higher education, AI enhances writing assistance, faculty research, classroom technology, and administrative functions, but it also raises concerns about academic integrity, low-quality content, and privacy (Katsamakas et al., 2024). The future will likely involve personalised AI assistants in institutions, requiring a balance between human and AI roles while prioritising skill development in their curricula. In transportation, automated vehicles and drones threaten various driving jobs and may shift vehicle ownership to rentals, contributing to reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Similarly, trade and sales are being transformed by online marketing and data analytics, displacing traditional sales roles while creating new opportunities for digital marketing and analytics professionals (Magnani, 2025). The banking and insurance sectors are moving towards digital services, causing many physical branches to close and leading to staff reductions. Robo-advisors and algorithmic trading are replacing traditional roles, increasing the demand for data scientists and cybersecurity experts (Magnani, 2025). In

healthcare, robots and AI are assisting doctors in diagnosis and surgery, while AI chatbots engage with patients to suggest diagnoses.

3.4.2. Theme Two: Skills Mismatch and Continuous Lifelong Learning

The FoW also faces a skills mismatch, where the abilities possessed by the current workforce do not align with the skills required for future jobs. Many employees' qualifications and skills were tailored to previous roles. Consequently, there is an urgent need for training and reskilling at an accelerated pace to keep up with these changes. Higher education institutions (HEIs) should revise their curricula to better align with the new skills demanded by industry, focusing on competencies such as adaptability, agility, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and interpersonal skills, which are essential for success in the workplace. Organisations and workers alike should prioritise lifelong learning to ensure a smooth transition into new work environments (Linthorst & Waal, 2020; Lim, 2023). Upskilling, reskilling, and developing the necessary digital competencies for the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions require a commitment to continuous lifelong learning (Jetha et al., 2021). Career sustainability will increasingly depend on individuals' ability to acquire new skills and adapt to changing industry trends. New roles will emerge, such as augmented machine operators, data analysts, and automated vehicle coordinators.

Policymakers should facilitate the development of new skills related to digital competencies, communication, information technology, data processing, and soft skills. Soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, resilience, flexibility, agility, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and empathy, which are less likely to be automated, will enable human workers to effectively collaborate with digital technologies or AI-enhanced systems in the workplace.

3.4.3. Theme Three: Change in Work Forms, Flexible Employment, and Workforce Composition

Literature highlights emerging forms of work that are defining the future, characterised by flexible employment, remote work, agile work methods, self-organisation, the sharing economy, the gig economy, and democratisation. Remote work allows individuals to work from locations like their homes, often facilitated by digital technology (Singer-Coudoux et al., 2023). Flexible employment refers to variations in working hours, locations, the types and amounts of work contracts, and forms of employment contracts.

The future of work will see an increase in remote, flexible, independent contractors and gig workers engaged in short-term contracts (Linthorst & Waal, 2020). However, these short-term arrangements often lead to job insecurity and a reduction in employment benefits, such as pensions and health insurance, which can intensify poverty in retirement or during health-related challenges. While flexible employment can provide economic benefits to employers and enhance company profitability, it also poses significant risks to employee welfare, facilitating a conflict between economic gains and social implications for sustainability.

Blaising et al. (2021) argue that pursuing an online freelancing career can lead to various types of stress. This includes financial stress due to income uncertainty and changing payment conditions, emotional stress from the self-managed and time-limited nature of online freelance tasks, relational stress resulting from a lack of social interactions and connections, and reputational stress tied to the effort required to build and maintain a strong reputation for securing work opportunities. The authors emphasise that freelancing is often not financially, emotionally, or relationally sustainable. Although flexible working conditions are often viewed as a reflection of an ideal work-life balance where employers provide

flexibility regarding location (working from home or in mixed locations), flexibility in time, and part-time workloads (Alsulami et al., 2022) can also lead to social isolation and loneliness, as well as job insecurity and income uncertainty (Schulte et al., 2020).

3.4.4. Theme Four: Nearshoring and Reshoring

Automation will encourage near-shoring and reshoring of manufacturing plants by companies. 'Nearshoring' refers to the movement of manufacturing activities to countries adjacent to the final market, whilst 'reshoring' refers to the return of certain manufacturing activities that had previously been relocated (Magnani, 2025). Plants which were once located in developing nations where labour was lower and more expensive will move back to their home countries and develop automated plants located closer to the final outlet markets. Although reshoring and nearshoring have their own advantages, they destabilise the economic systems from which companies are moving.

3.4.5 Theme Five: Increasing Inequality

The FoW will be characterised by increasing inequalities for individuals less likely to possess the new set of job skills, such as women, the less educated, individuals with low socioeconomic status and people living with disabilities. This translates to disequilibrium and inequalities, with a concentration of benefits gained by a few highly wealthy people coexisting with the majority of the disadvantaged labour force. These inequalities are not only a result of automation by AI but also because of changes like employee contracts (Paul et al., 2023). Schulte et al. (2020) noted a future of work with unequal distribution of wealth, income, opportunity and access to information.

To promote sustainability, the literature recommends an increase in governmental policies to eliminate inequalities and protect vulnerable employees. Organisations might need to offer training programmes for lower-skilled employees, which can lead to sustainable employment for this type of employee, and they will have to offer equal and sustainable pay and working conditions. This might, however, become a burden to organisations (Linthorst & Waal, 2020).

Automation of routine jobs is likely to develop inequalities between the educated and the less educated in emerging economies. This is especially true given that educational levels and digital literacy are quite low in emerging economies, especially among women and the rural population. The displacement of lower-level routine jobs will displace less-educated employees who might find it difficult to learn new skills and to secure another job in the formal sector. Hence, increasing inequalities are associated with social decline, with the few educated elites with digital skills securing jobs.

3.4.6. Theme Six: Generational Shifts in the Workforce

The composition of the workforce will change as Generation X/baby boomers and Generation Y/millennials (born 1980 to 2000) grow towards retirement, giving a chance for more Generation Z employees (1995-2005). The Generation Z workforce is anticipated to be well educated with digital skills, which could bring diversity to the workforce and facilitate inclusive and supportive workplaces (Jetha et al., 2021; Lim, 2023).

3.4.7. Theme Seven: Social Sustainability

Gamberini and Pluchino (2024) posited that social sustainability in the future of work can be sustained through employee technical assistance, upskilling, reskilling, service orientation, and personalisation,

which contributes to improved employee productivity, workplace safety, and satisfaction, ensuring dignity. International organisations like the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations promote Sustainable Development Goal 8 of decent work, where organisations are encouraged to promote inclusive and decent work that delivers a fair income, job security and social protection to foster the health and wellbeing of the working population (Rantanen et al., 2020; Jetha et al., 2021). Work should be designed in structures that facilitate social sustainability. To promote effective sustainable development, the macro (government) and meso (work) perspectives should collide and impact individuals' (micro-level) livelihoods. One of the important factors to consider in providing sustainable employment relates to a decent and fair income. Literature argues for the need for a universal basic income for all, where payment is made unconditionally to all adults of working age, regardless of skills, income, job, background, or location, and irrespective of any expectations for education or training (Carr et al., 2021).

3.4.8. Theme Eight: Environmental Sustainability

The literature documents the increased use of energy and emissions of greenhouse gases due to the increased use of AI systems and automation. However, AI systems can also be used in optimising resource use or aiding in conservation efforts. Moglia et al. (2022) suggest that remote work practices can reduce traffic congestion, emissions, and commuting times, which are linked to decreased private car travel. However, these practices also have implications for health, equity, quality of life, infrastructure, and workplace relations. Additionally, there may be an increase in household-to-household travel, meaning that the reduction in car travel is not always guaranteed. There is an urgent need for the development of low-emission technologies and energy-efficient solutions.

3.4.9. Theme Nine: Industry 5.0

Industry 5.0 emerged as a relevant research trend in the literature, which will affect the FoW and sustainability. Gamberini and Pluchino (2024) argued that after Industry 4.0, which mainly focuses on automation and efficiency, Industry 5.0 will extend and complement its predecessor by focusing on integrating human centricity, environmental responsibility, and resilience into industrial practices. The revolution will promote social sustainability by promoting machine and workforce collaborations, investing in human needs, justice, and respect for human rights and addressing uncertainties and disputes that arise in the face of scientific advancements and technological innovation.

3.5. Themes and Discussion of How Work Can Be Restructured to Meet the New Job Requirements of the Future of Work

Job redesign is a process of modifying jobs, tasks, and roles and managing the impact of these modifications on employees and the organisation. The process should address three key dimensions related to the work itself (nature of work), the individuals who perform it (workforce), and the location where it is carried out (workplace). This section examines how automation and AI have transformed the nature of work and how jobs should be redesigned in the FoW, providing insights on the skills required for the FoW.

3.5.1. Work Redesign

3.5.1.1. Teams and Horizontal Cross-Functional Projects

Yorks et al. (2021) argued for the deconstruction of jobs into discrete tasks and adopting agile processes in which work involves collaborations across functions as work is conducted. Work will be organised around cross-functional project teams brought together for specific projects and then disbanded, with the team members moving on to other diverse projects. Such team- and project-based work require a collaborative working environment. As teams become a centrepiece of human capital strategy, companies need to emphasise the collaborative aspects of culture, developing a rewards system that values work in teams and compensating team performance and coaching teams (Yorks et al., 2021).

3.5.1.2. Intelligent, Adaptable Smart Systems and Hybrid Interaction

In hybrid systems where a human and a machine work hand in hand in accomplishing a task, human-machine interfaces should be developed. A well-designed human-machine interface should be designed to allow effective communication between the machine and the human operator (Hirsch-Kreinsen & Ittermann, 2021). Companies should redesign their work and operations models with intelligent, adaptable smart systems that integrate people, data, and technology, with the ability to incorporate sensing, actuation, and control functions into a unified system to make decisions in a predictive and adaptive manner. Smart and resilient systems should have the capacity to analyse real-time operational and environmental data to anticipate, react, and recover from disruptions. Literature documents that beyond the fourth industrial revolution, the fifth industrial revolution focuses on human-automation symbiosis, where jobs are designed so that humans assist in providing soft skills, like developing AI systems that deliver efficient and effective functioning and proactively managing any form of disruption, whilst automation and AI systems conduct all the routine work. This interaction facilitates the achievement of new levels of efficiency, productivity, and resilience that neither human systems nor machine systems can attain on their own.

3.5.1.3. Resilience, Scalability and Interoperability

Installed AI or Internet of Things (IoT) systems should be resilient, scalable and interoperable. Scalability denotes the system's capacity to accommodate an increasing number of connected devices, services, and data flows without a decline in operational efficiency; interoperability pertains to the seamless collaboration between heterogeneous systems and devices, irrespective of differences in their architecture or communication standards (Reis & Serodio, 2026), whilst resilience refers to the system's capability to withstand shocks.

3.5.2. Workforce

3.5.2.1. Resilient and Skilled Operators

The future of work demands a workforce capable of operating AI systems, ensuring self-resilience and optimal functioning of the overall system. Literature argues that the fifth industrial revolution requires a balanced combination of smart, resilient systems and human skills needed for rapid cognition and creative option generation, as well as human backup. Therefore, future jobs will require individuals skilled in maintaining automation and AI systems, alongside AI development capabilities (Reis & Serodio, 2026). The upskilling and reskilling of the workforce is imminent.

3.5.2.2. Leverage or Optimise Contingent and Full-Time Workers

The FoW should be organised in a way that accommodates and optimises contingent and full-time workers. A new layer of workforce, such as crowd-sourced workers and project-based employees, which can be found on online platforms, will increase, hence requiring good data on the workforce. The proper mix and management of contingent and full-time workers is vital.

3.5.3. Workplace

3.5.3.1. Mobile, Hybrid, Remote, and Distributed Working Places

Breuer and Kienbaum (2024) argued that the FoW should be organised into mobile, hybrid, remote, and distributed working places, where work is not only performed in physical offices but also anywhere where there is connectivity or the required facilities. These forms of work will be necessitated by the nature of contracts and the digitalisation of work. However, working outside offices has several disadvantages related to control, confidentiality, health protection, sense of belonging and collaboration.

FoW will be designed with more flexible schedules, including teleworking and satellite or mobile offices, enabling employees to work anytime and anywhere through ICT and digital devices. In this regard, employees should have access to organisational knowledge on smartphones and computers to facilitate collaboration with managers and colleagues via video conferences, online meetings, and chats. In the same vein, Viswanathan and Rajendren (2025) argued that AI makes it easier for employees to operate remotely by enabling seamless collaboration across time zones and locations, allowing employees flexibility to modify their work schedules to suit their style and lifestyle, which promotes work-life balance, productivity, and employee satisfaction. However, teleworking presents a challenge of increasing technostress if not effectively managed, as employees might not work during regular hours, which could impact their personal lives.

The future of work is likely to be supported by hybrid working approaches with flexible hours, contingent work, and open workspaces, which promote employee autonomy. Literature mentions open workspaces equipped with technology to facilitate collaboration as part of the design of the FoW environment. Common workspaces, typically without doors and walls, create less hierarchical environments and enable more effective communication between leaders and subordinates. Viswanathan and Rajendren (2025) argued that collaboration and communication tools allow employees to quickly share information and work together on projects by communicating in real-time through communication technologies, thereby promoting teamwork and efficiency in decision-making. However, there is no consensus in the literature regarding their effectiveness in improving employee well-being, as some studies note that open workspaces can reduce employees' privacy, compromise security, lead to a loss of control, and create noisy environments. The redesign of workplaces in emerging economies will largely depend on a country's income levels, digital penetration, and digital literacy. In nations where digital adoption remains low, developing technologically equipped digital offices may take longer. In this context, the use of computers and employees' access to digital devices remain limited among small to medium enterprises in emerging economies.

On the other hand, challenges in monitoring employee productivity will rise as remote workers can perform multiple jobs by maintaining a digital presence across various devices. Some tools, such as electronic systems, robotics, teleconferencing, and wearable devices, can be deployed to monitor employees but raise governance and ethical concerns regarding privacy. Boundaries that previously

protected employees' private space are eroding, leaving them and their families vulnerable to intrusion on many levels. Health issues in FoW are also concerning, as literature indicates that remote workers experience reduced physical activity and prolonged screen time, leading to headaches, fatigue, lethargy, eye problems, and potentially increased depression. Organisations will be mandated to ensure their employees can work from home safely in the FoW.

4. Future Developments and Trends in the Field of Study

An increasing trend in articles related to FoW and sustainability was observed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a significant rise in automation and the adoption of AI systems in emerging economies, replacing routine tasks. FoW will demand soft skills such as critical thinking, AI system development, and digital technical skills to ensure AI systems' resilience. However, the literature also notes that ongoing AI development could replace some jobs requiring critical thinking. It highlights the urgency of proactive measures, like education and training, to prepare the workforce for the evolving work environment shaped by AI technologies. Educational institutions need to adapt curricula to include digital skills relevant to the economy. To promote inclusivity in reskilling and upskilling, training should be delivered via hybrid methods combining physical and virtual attendance, allowing learners to progress at their own pace and time. Jobs should be redesigned to enable human-automation cooperation, ensuring employees are retained and reassigned to new roles. Workspaces, the nature of work, and employment contracts will change to accommodate hybrid working systems and open workspaces in FoW. A regulatory framework is necessary to ensure the ethical use of AI, protect employees, and enforce reskilling facilities.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the future of work and sustainability concerning AI, automation, and job redesign through a systematic review. The FoW will be characterised by increasing inequalities, with a concentration of benefits gained by a few highly wealthy people and digitally skilled individuals. The corresponding widespread unemployment could necessitate the implementation of a universal basic income. Flexible employment, remote work, agile work methods, self-organisation, the sharing economy, and the gig economy will be the dominant forms of work. FoW should be redesigned in teams and horizontal cross-functional projects, intelligent, adaptable smart systems and hybrid interaction, with resilience, scalability and interoperability. Whilst the workforce should have resilient and skilled operators, it should leverage or optimise contingent and full-time workers. The workplace environment should have mobile, hybrid, remote, and distributed workplaces. The literature emphasises critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, and complex problem-solving as core skills employees need to develop in FoW, as these are difficult for AI to emulate. FoW will feature more flexible, hybrid workplaces with contingent and remote working options. The literature also stresses the urgency of proactive measures like education and training to prepare the workforce for FoW, alongside regulatory policies that promote the ethical use of AI, protect employees, and ensure reskilling opportunities.

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